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## The Inter-American Defense Board, an interview with Colonel Rowcliffe

Colonel Rowcliffe discusses the efforts of the IADB, MARMINCA, OAS and PADCA in coordinating demining efforts in Central America.



by Margaret S. Busé, Editor

Margaret Busé (MB): What are the origins of the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB)? How did it become affiliated with the Organization of American States (OAS)?

Colonel Charles Rowcliffe (Col. R): The IADB was initially created as a stand-alone organization during World War II to unite the Americas for the Allied cause. Later the Board evolved and became the uniformed military advisory component to the OAS. The Board includes the Inter-American Defense College, which is also subordinate to the OAS. The demining staff of the IADB supports the OAS' demining action program in the Americas. Basically, they manage the program, and we provide technical supervision to the International Supervisors who form MARMINCA (Mission of Assistance for the Removal of Mines in Central America) in Central America. MARMINCA is composed of uniformed military officers and non-commissioned officers on

assignment from member states of the OAS.

MB: The IADB does a variety of military activities, and demining is one aspect of that?

Col. R: Correct.

MB: So then do you work with PADCA through the OAS?

Col. R: Like the demining staff, there are other specialized staffs within the IADB that interact directly with their OAS counterparts. The IADB demining staff supports the mine action program, which is part of the OAS' Unit for the Promotion of Democracy. PADCA is the OAS' in-country element—they conduct direct liaison with the host nation and provide administrative and logistical sup-

port to MARMINCA personnel and the host nation demining personnel.

MB: How does it work for a host country—for instance Ecuador and Peru—that recently signed demining agreements with the OAS—do they come to the OAS directly and request demining?

Col. R: Each country program has its peculiarities. Typically, the host nation requests OAS' assistance in its demining effort. The OAS mine action program is beneficial to the host nation because the OAS seeks monetary assistance from donor nations to offset the expenditures associated with a national demining program. The OAS' demining program, in addition to providing demining operations, also consists of a mine awareness and victim assistance program. After analyz-



■ The IADB in Honduras. c/o IADB

ing the national demining plan provided by the host nation, the OAS, with input from the IADB, proposes a supportable demining program. The program includes the presence of international officers who watch over host-nation mine clearing operations. The role of the international officers, who are referred to as International Supervisors in Central America, is to ensure that demining operations conform to United Nations demining standards.

MB: Who does the initial surveying?

Col. R: The host nation. Typically each nation determines priority criteria for demining. Obviously those ar-

reas that pose the greatest risk to the populace have the highest priority. However, other factors come into play, such as accessibility, evacuation capability and transportation to the mined area. The International Supervisors of MARMINCA play a role in this process because they are the OAS' representative at the operational mine-clearing site.

MB: When the country gives the OAS a demining plan, they draw the IADB into it and it becomes a joint effort?

Col. R: Correct. The IADB plays a complementary role in analyzing the national plan to ensure it is supportable and meets the parameters of the



■ Detonating a mine. Observe that the charges were put beside the mine. c/o IADB

UN-established demining standards. In most cases, the host nation is already conducting demining operations and has a basis to know what is feasible. We are fortunate because the objectives of the national demining plan coincide with the objectives of the OAS and by extension MARMINCA. The bottom line being to conduct safe demining operations within the parameters of international standards in the most feasible manner possible.

MB: What do you think has changed?

Col. R: Who would have thought 20 years ago that the Central American nations would cooperate with each other and accept uniformed military personnel from neighboring countries to conduct demining operations? That there is this level of political-military cooperation is a credit to the OAS' ability to overcome historical political sensitivities and gain multilateral cooperation.

MB: Do you think a structure like this would work in Eastern Europe?

Col. R: The circumstances are different. A multi-national approach to demining under the auspices of a capable regional organization is based on cooperation and trust. These conditions are essential for a cooperative humanitarian demining program to succeed, and my understanding is that Eastern Europe faces challenges in these areas.

■ MARMINCA personnel are comprised from military forces throughout the Americas. c/o IADB

### PESSOAL DA MARMINCA Locais de Atuação SITUAÇÃO EM 30/ABR/01

<b>a. Jefatura de la Misión (Managua – Nicaragua)</b>		
1)	Cnel. Luis Felipe Ramos González	Guatemala
2)	Cap. Rogério Cetrim Siqueira	Brasil
<b>b. Frente de Operaciones Nº 3 (Juigalpa – Nicaragua)</b>		
3)	Cap. Paulo Fernando Curci Curti	Brasil
4)	TN Anulfo José Córdova Gómez	Venezuela
5)	Cap. Frank Alexander Zurita Hernández	Venezuela
6)	Cap. Bernardo Antonio Cadima Enríquez	Bolivia
7)	Tte. João Marcelo Gómez da Silva Batista	Brasil
8)	Tte. Ricardo Dency Abarca Meza	El Salvador
9)	Sgto. 1º Niomar Schwambach	Brasil
<b>c. Frente de Operaciones Nº 4 (Ocotal – Nicaragua)</b>		
10)	Cap. José Luis Araujo dos Santos	Brasil
11)	Tte. Cesar Augusto Loza Baldivieso	Bolivia
12)	Tte. Eduardo Ernesto Ayala Sorto	El Salvador
13)	Tte. Orlando de Oliveira Marin	Brasil
14)	Sub Tte. Duvier Arnaldo Mejía Ramos	El Salvador
15)	Sgto. 1º Eraldo Rozendo Soares	Brasil
<b>d. Frente de Operaciones Nº 5 (Siuna – Nicaragua)</b>		
16)	Cap. Iván Alexei Arias Rodríguez	Guatemala
17)	Tte. Marton Daniel Grala	Brasil
18)	Sgto. 1º Décio Antônio Kozievitch	Brasil
19)	Sgto. 1º Israel Sánchez Rauda	El Salvador
20)	Sgto. 1º Ubiraci José dos Santos	Brasil
21)	Sgto. 1º José Luiz García Villar	Brasil
<b>e. Guatemala</b>		
22)	Myr. Luis Alejandro Jiménez Villarruel	Venezuela
23)	Tte. Manuel Antonio Castro Isaula	Honduras
24)	Tte. José Edgardo Milla Díaz	Honduras
<b>f. Costa Rica</b>		
25)	Cap. Wilson Guedes Loureiro	Brasil
26)	Tte. Carlos Efraín Aguillar Hernández	Honduras
27)	Tte. Oscar Orlando Soler Soto	Honduras
<b>g. Honduras (San Marcos de Colón)</b>		
28)	Myr. Antonio José Moreno Villamizar	Venezuela
29)	Myr. Otto Isauro Méndez Calderón	Guatemala
30)	Cap. Robinson Javier González del Río	Colombia
31)	Sgto. 1º Luis Fernando Moreno	Colombia
32)	Sgto. 2º Dionisio Torres Sierra	Colombia



## Latin America

**MB:** Do you ever work with any of the NGOs or corporate companies?

**Col. R:** We do on both counts to a limited degree. NGOs and corporate companies interact more with the OAS. NGOs play a more important role in the humanitarian demining process in some regions of the world and frequently provide the stimulus for humanitarian demining. From an IADB perspective, their contributions at international demining forums are informative and relevant. Regarding corporate companies, we do interact on a limited basis with suppliers and track the latest trends in demining technology. Until recently, a corporate company trained and maintained the demining dogs in the region.

**MB:** Do you ever incorporate any other aspects of mine action such as mine awareness?

**Col. R:** Yes. As I mentioned, demining is but one pillar of the OAS' mine action program—the others being mine awareness and victim assistance. Though the IADB's involvement is limited, our activities in-country are coordinated to ensure an integrated effort, which is the basis of the OAS' Mine Action Program.

**MB:** What is your opinion on the integrated approach to mine action?

**Col. R:** In the case of the OAS, which has the good fortune to exercise a regional approach to demining, it makes perfect sense. Basically, the result is a full-spectrum demining program that allows for the coordinated and synchronized use of limited resources.



■ Dogs have been successful in many demining operations throughout Central America. c/o OAS

**MB:** Many feel that you cannot be a jack-of-all-trades when it comes to mine action.

**Col. R:** I agree. The synchronization of assets to address the political, logistical and operational variables of a demining program are a constant challenge. We are again fortunate because our program draws on the strength of a civilian-military (OAS-IADB) structure to best address the regional challenges we face. The system works, but that is not to say that it is perfect. We are always learning and hopefully improving.

**MB:** How effective have mine dogs been in demining Central America?

**Col. R:** Many variables determine the success of mine dogs. While they serve an important role in the demining program, there are limitations to their utilization. Terrain, weather and previous explosions can all impact a mine

dog's performance. Mine dogs have served us well in Central America and are integrated in demining operations. One observation I have made is that we at times forget that the human handler requires as much or more training as his canine companion.

**MB:** Is it a funding problem or a terrain problem that large equipment hasn't been used?

**Col. R:** Mostly a terrain problem but obviously large machinery is expensive and is not always suited for non-standard or nuisance mine fields, especially when the amount of mines does not justify the expense. We recently thought we had the ideal parameters for demining machinery implementation, but the experts who conducted a site survey told us otherwise.

**MB:** Is there anything about the mine situation that is unique to Central America?

**Col. R:** I think we are unique because we benefit from regional cooperation and national will. The cooperative spirit is amplified by the mine action umbrella provided by a regional organization—the OAS. After all, unless there are abuses, it is difficult to criticize humanitarian demining efforts, especially when it is part of a mine action program. Additionally, the MARMINCA supervisors are an eager group of proud officers and NGOs who bring energy and professionalism to the cause.

**MB:** What will be the time frame for the mission in Ecuador?

**Col. R:** Last month Ecuador signed an agreement with the OAS—operations should be up and running by next year. From the IADB's perspective, we will work with the OAS and Ecuadorian representatives to determine their requirements. Our support

recommendation will be based on their national demining plan, which serves as a base document. Our recommendation is staffed through the OAS and once approved, it will be presented to the Ecuadorian government. I have oversimplified the process as there is considerable coordination and negotiation among all participants to ensure a supportable program. Again, we are fortunate because our MARMINCA experience in Central America will help us avoid potential pitfalls.

**MB:** Is there anything else that you will be doing in the next year ahead?

**Col. R:** Yes. In addition to Ecuador, the IADB will be supporting the soon to-be-signed OAS Peru mine action agreement. Later this month we will participate in the UN-sponsored International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) regional workshop in Lima,

## Interview with Col. Rowcliffe

Peru. The IMAS is the baseline document to standardize humanitarian demining. The IMAS is a tedious but essential process, as it provides the operational parameters for the conduct of humanitarian demining throughout the world. ■

### Biography

Colonel Charles Rowcliffe is a U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer with five tours in South America. He served as Defense Attaché in Paraguay and most recently in Brazil. He is an MA graduate of Latin American Studies at Stanford University.

### Contact Information

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LOGROS DEL PADCA HASTA EI 30 DE ABRIL DE 2001										
FECHAS		Hasta 12/00	Jan	Feb	Mar	Abr	Mai	Jun	01/01-06/01	TOTAL
COSTA RICA	Minas/Artefactos Destruídos	323	0	4	0	0	-	-	4	327
	Desechos de Guerra	4257	0	240	32	110	-	-	382	4639
	Area Barrida	126706.90	0	2479	344	1880	-	-	4703	131409.9
GUATEMALA	Minas/Artefactos Destruídos	234	2	5	3	0	-	-	10	244
	Desechos de Guerra	1896	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	1896
	Area Barrida	7751.50	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	7751.5
HONDURAS	Minas/Artefactos Destruídos	2241	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	2241
	Desechos de Guerra	52741	0	0	0	1	-	-	1	52742
	Area Barrida	368762.5	0	0	0	2856	-	-	2856	371618.5
NICARAGUA	Minas/Artefactos Destruídos	8150	105	508	213	171	-	-	997	9147
	Desechos de Guerra	157286	3005	3364	10696	5786	-	-	22851	180117
	Area Barrida	295128.25	6070	11705.5	36801	22731	-	-	77307.5	372435.75
SOMA	Minas Destruídas	10948	107	517	216	171	-	-	1011	11959
	Desechos de Guerra	216160	3005	3604	10728	5897	-	-	23234	239394
	Area Barrida	798349.15	6070	14184.5	37145	27467	-	-	84866.5	883215.65

■ MARMINCA demining operations as of April 2001. c/o IADB